

## What Does It Mean To Be Born-Again?

'You have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth through the Holy Spirit in sincere brotherly affection. Love one another fervently from the heart, having been born-again, not of mortal seed, but of immortal Seed, through the Word of God which lives and lasts forever' (1 Peter 1:22 & 23).

The words 'born-again' have been bandied around all over the world and taken completely out of the context in which it was originally meant. The original phrase had spiritual significance. It does not mean 'turning over a new leaf', losing weight, moving house or accepting different employment. It is to live a whole new way of life, changing our attitude to God, to other people and to life. It means to take a good look at one's own sinful ways, do a complete turn around, go the opposite direction, accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour, and from then on, stop sinning, repent of every sin ever committed and walk in habitual fellowship with God the Father through Jesus the Son, with the help of the Holy Spirit. The people in the Corinthian church were once sinners, but they were born-again and were spiritually cleansed. 'Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. The immoral, idolaters, adulterers, prostitutes, homosexuals, thieves, the covetous, drunkards, slanderers, extortioners, none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God. Such were some of you, but you were washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and in the Holy Spirit of our God' (1 Corinthians 6:9 to 11).

Without God in our lives we are lost and without direction. With God in our lives, we are headed in the direction of eternal life with Him. The fact is, we cannot live without the Lord because He is our every breath. 'Who does not know ... the hand of the Lord has done this, in Whose hand is the life of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind?' (Job 12:9 & 10). God said the people in Noah's day had lost direction. 'God looked upon the world and saw how corrupt it was, for all humanity had corrupted their way on the earth and lost their true direction' (Genesis 6:12). The prophet Isaiah acknowledged all humanity had gone astray, but God sent Jesus to cleanse us from our iniquity. 'All we like sheep have gone astray. Everyone has turned to his own way; and God the Father has laid on Him (Jesus) the iniquity of us all' (Isaiah 53:6). The Lord sent Jesus to help every person turn away from doing evil, and God listens to people who turn to Him. 'God raised up Jesus and sent Him to you to bless you, to turn every one of you from your wickedness' (Acts 3:26). 'They who would love life and see good days, let them keep their tongue from evil and their lips from speaking deceit. Let them turn away from evil and do good. Let them seek peace and pursue it, for the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears open to their prayer; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil' (1 Peter 3:10 to 12).

Jesus strongly commanded us to be born-again if we want to enter into eternal life which is the Kingdom of God. He made the absolute distinction between the birth of a baby in the natural (the flesh) and supernatural spiritual birth. Jesus said, "Most solemnly (surely, certainly) I tell you, unless one is born-again, they cannot see the Kingdom of God." ... "Most solemnly (assuredly, certainly) I tell you, unless one is born of water (baptism) and the Holy Spirit, they cannot enter into the Kingdom of God! That which is born of the flesh is flesh (natural birth). That which is born of the Holy Spirit is spirit (spiritual birth). Do not marvel (do not be surprised or astonished) that I said to you, 'You must be born-again'" (John 3:3 to 7).

Being born-again means to live a kindly and selfless life, and to do the right thing in all circumstances. To employees who constantly whinge about their wages and sometimes strike for higher pay, the Bible says we are not to do that. 'The multitudes asked, "What must we do?" He answered them, "He who has two coats, let him give to the one who has none. He who has food, let him share what he has." Tax collectors also came to be baptised, and they said to him, "Teacher, what must we do?" He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount appointed to you." Soldiers also asked him saying, "What about us? What must we do?" He said to them, "Extort from no one by violence, neither accuse anyone wrongfully. Be content with your wages." (Luke 3:10 to 14).

Being born-again means to give up the old sinful pursuits and embrace what God has for us, whatever that may be. 'I have learned to be content in whatever state I am in. I know how to be humbled, and I know how to live in abundance. In everything and in all things I have learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in need' (Philippians 4:11 & 12).

Being born-again means to live for God and not for ourselves. 'Do not love the world, neither the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world the Father's love is not in him. All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not the Father's, but is the world's' (1 John 2:15 & 16).

People who are genuinely born-again, show the fruits of the Holy Spirit; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness and self-control' (Galatians 5:22 & 23).

Being born-again means to love Jesus more than we love our families. It means loving Jesus more than we love our own lives. Jesus said, "If anyone comes to Me and does not love Me more than their own father, mother, wife, children, brothers and sisters, and yes, even their own life also, they cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). 'They overcame because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony. They did not love their life, even to death' (Revelation 12:11).

Being born-again means to live our lives in such a way that we make the ungodly of this world notice because our righteousness should be evident and open. Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13). One example, is when the ungodly act badly then apologise for their bad behaviour, because they know they are in the company of a genuine Christian and that is enough to make them feel ashamed and it pricks their conscience, while born-again believers can enjoy having a clear conscience. 'Having a good conscience, that while you are spoken against as evildoers, they may be disappointed who curse your good manner of life' (1 Peter 3:16). Are we living a life that allows God's Light to shine through us? 'Even so, let your light shine before men so they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven' (Matthew 5:16). 'You are witnesses with God, how holy, righteously and blamelessly we behave ourselves toward you who believe' (1 Thessalonians 2:10).

Sin makes us spiritually unclean and unfit for heaven, so we all need to be spiritually washed. Being born-again means to be spiritually washed by the Bible, the Word of God as we read it daily; we are washed by the waters of baptism, and we are washed by the blood of Jesus. 'You are cleansed already, because of the Word which I have spoken to you' (John 15:3). 'Why do you wait? Arise, be baptised and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord' (Acts 22:16). 'From Jesus, the Faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and washed us from our sins by his blood' (Revelation 1:5).

Being born-again gives us a positive outlook on life. 'Whatever things are true, whatever things are honourable, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are gracious; if there is any virtue and if there is any praise, think about these things' (Philippians 4:8).

Being born-again gives us a love for God and our fellow man that surpasses anything on earth. 'You will love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. The second commandment is this; You shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these' (Mark 12:30 & 31).

People who do not know God, walk in man's foolishness. The things of God seem foolish to them because spiritual things can only be discerned by a Holy Spirit filled born-again believer. 'The natural man does not receive the things of God's Holy Spirit for they are foolishness to him and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned' (1 Corinthians 2:14). A born-again believer can ask for God's wisdom and He will give it liberally. 'If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God Who gives to all liberally and without reproach; and it will be given to him' (James 1:5).

Being born-again changes our lives completely. We are washed from the inside and are free from the guilt and shame sin places upon us, and when we are free from the guilt of sin, we can approach God with boldness. 'Beloved, if our consciences do not accuse us or make us feel guilty, we have boldness before God' (1 John 3:21).

Being born-again gives us both kinds of grace – a free gift of salvation by the unmerited grace of God, and also a sweet, gentle, kindly, demeanour. 'From His fullness we all received grace upon grace, for the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus' (John 1:16 & 17). 'Living with complete humility, with patience, making allowances for one another because you love one another' (Ephesians 4:2). 'Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus. To him be the glory both now and forever. Amen' (2 Peter 3:18).

Amen and God bless you.

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